

Great Tey Parish Council

Minutes for the
Annual Allotment Meeting
of Great Tey Parish Council
held at
Great Tey Village Hall
dated

Tuesday 15th September
2026
at 6.30pm





Great Tey Parish Council



Minutes of the Great Tey Parish Annual Allotment Meeting held at Great Tey Parish Hall on Tuesday 15th September 2026 at 6.30pm.

Minutes

Present: Cllrs T. Frances (Chair), R. Frost (Vice-Chair), A. Warnes, Y. Marriott, N. Goodman.

Also Present: L. Ritchie-Fagg (Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer) and nine members of the public.

The meeting was opened at 6.30pm by the Chair, Cllr T. Frances.

Chairman's Welcome and Meeting Notice: The Chair welcomed all attendees and reminded those present that discussions should be conducted respectfully, through the Chair, and in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders. Members of the public were reminded that the Open Forum item is the designated opportunity for public speaking unless otherwise invited by the Chair. The Chair advised that, to assist with the preparation of accurate minutes, the meeting would be audio recorded by the Parish Clerk.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Cllrs R. Bartleet.
2. **Minutes of 2025 Annual Allotment Meeting to be approved:** There was no Annual Allotment Meeting held in 2025.
3. **Annual Report:** Cllr Y. Marriott, the Parish Council's Allotment Representative, provided an update on the allotment site and advised that a number of improvements had been identified as being required. Three allotment inspections had been undertaken during recent months. It was explained that the Council had been reviewing the management and administration of the site, particularly as the allotment documentation and tenancy arrangements had not been comprehensively updated for approximately 17 years. Cllr Y. Marriott advised that it was felt an allotment tenant being invited to act as a Site Representative would be helpful, providing a point of contact and conduit between allotment holders and the Parish Council. This was intended to improve communication and enable matters concerning the site to be raised and addressed more effectively. The Council recognised the importance of working collaboratively with allotment holders going forward and improving the overall management, maintenance and communication arrangements for the site.
4. **Allotment Deposit, Updated Tenancy Agreement & Mandatory National Allotment Society Membership Updates:** The Parish Clerk provided background on the review undertaken since commencing employment with the Parish Council and explained the reasons for the changes being introduced. The Parish Clerk acknowledged the considerable value of the allotments to tenants and the wider community, providing opportunities for growing produce, recreation, peace and quiet, family time and general enjoyment. However, following a review of the allotment finances, it had become apparent that the existing rental income did not provide sufficient provision for the longer-term maintenance and management of the site. Maintenance expenditure does not necessarily arise annually, and significant costs may instead occur periodically, for example every three, five or seven years or beyond. The Parish Clerk advised that information and guidance had been sought from the National Allotment Society (NAS), Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) and National Association of Local Councils (NALC) as part of the review. It was explained that the current annual rental charge of £26 equates to 50p per week. Once costs associated with the site, including the water supply, are taken into account, there is limited provision available to establish a maintenance fund for future repairs and improvements. The Parish Clerk also explained the purpose of the Parish Council precept and the Council's responsibility to manage its finances appropriately for the benefit of the parish as a whole. The intention is for the allotment site to become increasingly financially sustainable, with sufficient income available to meet its ongoing and future expenditure and to reduce reliance upon the Council's general reserves and precept.



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The annual allotment rental charge for the 2026/27 allotment year would remain at £26 per plot. The previously agreed phased increases were confirmed as £38 and £50 respectively over the following two allotment years, subject to any subsequent review or decision of the Parish Council.

The introduction of the £50 refundable allotment deposit was explained. The purpose of the deposit is to provide financial protection where a tenancy ends, and a plot is left requiring clearance or remedial works which would otherwise have to be funded by the Parish Council.

Cllr Y. Marriott confirmed that deposits would be separately identified and would not form part of the Council's general income. Any interest attributable to the deposits would be allocated to the allotment maintenance fund.

Where a plot is returned in an acceptable condition and no chargeable clearance or remedial works are required, the deposit would be returned to the outgoing tenant.

It was confirmed that the deposit is a one-off payment for the tenancy and not an annual charge. Where a tenant may experience difficulty paying the deposit in one payment, the possibility of paying by instalments could be discussed with the Council.

The mandatory National Allotment Society membership of £3.50 per member per annum was also explained. Membership includes Public Liability Insurance for individual members. The Parish Council holds its own Public Liability Insurance in respect of its responsibilities for the allotment site; however, this does not provide the same individual cover for tenants.

5. **Updated Allotment Plot Numbers:** The Parish Clerk advised that the allotment plot numbers had been reviewed and updated to provide a consistent numbering system across the site.

To assist existing tenants with the transition, the updated tenancy agreement documentation identifies both the previous plot number and the new plot number.

The updated information would be included within the documentation issued to each tenant for the forthcoming allotment year, together with welcome information, relevant health and safety information and annual invoice.

6. **New Tenancy Agreement:** The Parish Clerk shared the updated tenancy agreement with the allotment holders. Tenants were asked to complete and return their agreements to the Parish Clerk, the Allotment Representative or via the designated letterbox at Great Tey Village Hall by 1st October 2026, being the commencement of the new allotment year.

It was explained that the tenancy agreement had been reviewed and updated as part of the Council's wider review of the allotment site and its management arrangements.

Following discussion later within the Open Public Forum regarding the cultivation requirements contained within the agreement, it was agreed that the wording would be reviewed to ensure that tenants were not inadvertently placed in breach simply because permitted sheds, compost bins or other structures occupied part of their plot.

The intention would be for the tenancy agreement to focus upon plots being actively used, appropriately cultivated and maintained to a reasonable standard, including appropriate weed management and ensuring that weeds are not allowed to go to seed and adversely affect neighbouring plots. Appropriate use of weed membrane would be acceptable as part of plot management.

The matters raised at the Annual Allotment Meeting would be reported to the Parish Council. Should the Council approve any amendment to the tenancy agreement, this would be incorporated by way of an amendment or appendix.

7. **Open Public Forum:** A detailed and constructive discussion took place between allotment holders, Parish Councillors, the Parish Clerk and the Council's Maintenance Contractor.

Historical Management and Communication: A number of tenants expressed concern that historically enquiries and reports relating to the allotment site had not always received a response from the Parish Council. Tenants



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also expressed disappointment that they had not had greater opportunity to discuss the proposed changes with the Council before they were introduced.

It was further raised that an Allotment Representative or Parish Councillor had not been invited to an earlier meeting concerning the tenancy arrangements. Cllr Y. Marriott acknowledged the concerns and advised that, going forward, matters relating to the allotments should be sent to the Parish Clerk and Allotment Representatives so that they could be appropriately recorded and progressed.

It was suggested that quarterly allotment meetings could be introduced to provide a regular opportunity for tenants and the Council to discuss matters concerning the site.

The Council and tenants expressed a desire to draw a line under historical issues and establish improved communication and a constructive working relationship going forward.

Site Condition and Historical Waste: Tenants raised concerns regarding the condition in which some plots had historically been left by previous tenants.

One tenant explained that their plot had been inherited with considerable debris, including old double-glazed units. Some of the glass was now breaking and, due to the growth of brambles around the area, had become increasingly difficult to access safely.

Tenants felt that there needed to be a clear starting point under the new arrangements so that existing allotment holders were not held responsible for waste, structures or other items inherited from previous tenants. It was suggested that a coordinated clearance could be undertaken to address historical waste and allow the site to move forward from a consistent starting point. The Council's Maintenance Contractor confirmed that they hold the appropriate waste licence and advised that tenants could potentially work together to move agreed waste into a designated and secure collection area. This could be temporarily cordoned off using Harris fencing prior to collection. Tenants asked whether the Parish Council would consider contributing towards the cost of removing the accumulated historical waste. Cllr T. Frances advised that he would put a proposal to the Parish Council for consideration, with the aim of placing the allotments on a firm footing for the future and allowing both the Council and tenants to move forward from a clear starting point. It was clarified that no decision regarding the Council funding the clearance had been made at the Annual Allotment Meeting. The proposal would be considered at the Parish Council meeting commencing later that evening and tenants would subsequently be advised of the outcome.

Photographic Record of Existing Plots: It was proposed that photographs be taken of each allotment plot at or around the commencement of the new allotment year on 1st October 2026.

The photographs would provide a baseline record of the condition of each plot and would identify any sheds, structures, waste or other historical items inherited by existing tenants.

This would provide clarity for both the Council and tenants when the condition of a plot is subsequently assessed at the end of a tenancy.

Deposit Scheme: Tenants raised a number of questions regarding the £50 deposit, including what would happen where a tenant had to relinquish a plot because of ill health and was unable to undertake clearance.

The Council explained that the purpose of the deposit was to provide a mechanism for meeting reasonable clearance or remedial costs where these became necessary at the end of a tenancy. Where no such works were required, the deposit would be returned. A tenant queried the position where an existing shed had been inherited with the plot and subsequently deteriorated. It was explained that the proposed photographic record would identify structures and items already present at the commencement of the new arrangements.

A request was made regarding whether the allotment deposit could be paid by cheque or by way of an IOU. It was confirmed that IOUs would not be accepted. Cheques would also not be accepted due to their limited validity period and the ongoing administration required to monitor and replace expired cheques. The Council



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reiterated that the deposit was a one-off payment and that tenants experiencing difficulty making the payment in full could discuss the possibility of instalments.

Rental Charges and Plot Sizes: A number of tenants expressed concern regarding the future increases in allotment rental charges and commented that the proposed £50 charge could make the site comparatively expensive against other allotment sites in the surrounding area. It was also raised that some plots were considered by tenants to be half or smaller plots. The Parish Clerk advised that, following discussions with the National Allotment Society, there was no single standard measurement universally defining allotment plot sizes and that the Parish Council was responsible for determining the arrangements applicable to its own site. The historical charging arrangements were discussed, including that tenants occupying two plots had historically paid two rental charges. Cllr R. Frost commented that comparisons with other allotment sites needed to take account of what was included within the rental charge, as some sites charge separately for water and other facilities. The Council confirmed that the rental increases had been introduced on a phased basis. Tenants could approach the Parish Council ahead of future increases should they wish to request that the charges be reviewed.

Water Provision: A tenant raised a historical query regarding the provision of water tanks and advised that it had previously been understood that two tanks would be installed at the allotment site, whereas only one had been provided. The matter was noted as part of the wider discussion regarding site facilities and expenditure.

Sheds, Structures and the Site Perimeter: Cllr Y. Marriott raised concerns regarding the perimeter of the allotment site. It was explained that sheds and other structures had historically been permitted around parts of the perimeter and that this was now creating some maintenance and health and safety concerns. Following discussion, it was considered reasonable for existing sheds around the perimeter to remain while they continued to be safe and serviceable. As tenancies end or structures reached the end of their usable life, opportunities could be taken to progressively improve and restore the perimeter. Where a tenant relinquishes a plot and an incoming tenant wishes to retain usable items or structures already present, this could be accommodated where appropriate and agreed. The need to repair the allotment gate post and sections of fencing was also raised and noted for further consideration.

Waste and Skip Bags: The historical use of skip bags attached to the perimeter fencing was discussed. It was noted that attaching heavy bags to the fencing could cause damage and should not continue. Tenants again referred to occasions where concerns had previously been reported but responses had not been received. Improved communication arrangements would be established going forward.

Soil Conditions and Cultivation: Tenants explained that the clay soil at the allotment site could be difficult to cultivate and required considerable ongoing improvement. Vegetation encroaching from boundaries was also raised as an issue. Raised beds were discussed as one possible option to improve growing conditions and enable tenants to build up suitable growing soil. Tenants also raised concerns regarding the cultivation requirements within the updated tenancy agreement, particularly where sheds, compost bins and other permitted structures could occupy a significant proportion of a plot. It was agreed that the wording would be reviewed, with the emphasis being placed upon plots being appropriately maintained and actively used, rather than tenants inadvertently breaching the agreement because of permitted structures. Appropriate weed control, including use of weed membrane, would be acceptable provided plots were maintained and weeds were not allowed to go to seed and adversely affect neighbouring plots. Any proposed amendment would be referred to the Parish Council and, if approved, incorporated into the tenancy documentation.

Alternative Funding and Grants: Tenants asked whether alternative sources of funding could be considered for the allotment site, including Section 106 funding and the Village Fund. The Parish Clerk explained that Section 106 monies are subject to specific requirements and could not automatically be used towards general allotment expenditure. It was also explained that the Parish Clerk could not make an application to the Village Fund on



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behalf of allotment holders where this was not a Parish Council funding stream available for that purpose. However, tenants or an appropriate allotment group could investigate grant and funding opportunities for which they may be eligible.

Children's Allotment Plot: A question was raised regarding insurance associated with the children's allotment plot. It was explained that the children's plot had been supported through grant funding to provide children within the local community with the opportunity to participate in growing activities, including those who may not have access to an appropriate growing space at home or school. It was noted that grant funding could not be guaranteed indefinitely and alternative funding or fundraising may therefore need to be considered in future.

Communal Composting: The provision of communal compost bins was discussed. It was noted that this had previously been suggested by the Council but had not progressed. Allotment holders advised that they had not been aware of the previous proposal. The matter could therefore be reconsidered as part of future discussions between the Council and tenants.

Historical Financial Information / Freedom of Information Request: Queries were raised regarding financial information previously supplied in response to a Freedom of Information request, including expenditure which tenants questioned as being attributable to the allotment site. The Parish Clerk explained that the information supplied had been compiled from the historical financial records available to the Council going back to 2012. The figures used were taken from accounting records inherited from previous Clerks, which had historically been presented to the Parish Council and formed part of the Council's financial and audit records. It was explained that not all underlying documentation from earlier years remained available, including historic cheque-book stubs and supporting records. The Clerk had therefore used the information available within the Council's records and had provided the information in good faith. A specific query was raised regarding references to tree works, with tenants advising that there were no trees situated within the allotment site. This was noted.

Implementation of the New Arrangements: A request was made for the deposit scheme, rental changes and mandatory NAS membership to be deferred. It was explained that these arrangements had previously been considered by the Parish Council and were due to take effect for the new allotment year commencing 1st October 2026. Cllr T. Frances advised that the Parish Council was undertaking wider work to place its finances and assets on a more sustainable footing ahead of the forthcoming budget review and the setting of the precept in January 2027. The Council acknowledged that some tenants felt that insufficient notice had been provided regarding the changes. It was explained that the rental increases had been phased rather than introduced in full immediately and that tenants remained able to approach the Council to request a future review.

Moving Forward: The overall discussion concluded with agreement on the importance of the Parish Council and allotment holders working together to improve the site and establish a clear starting point for the new arrangements.

8. **Next Annual Allotment Meeting:** Tuesday, 19th October 2027

Closure

Lynsey Ritchie-Fagg: Parish Clerk & RFO
18th September 2026